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ABSTRACT

This study used interaction process analysis, personal interviews, and Likert's "Profile of Organizational Characteristics" to assess the communication patterns of two television organizations in two selected corporations. By systematic observation of the two corporate executives that directed these television organizations, the study found that the philosophies of the companies and their actual communication activities differed and that the corporate leaders had similar roles but saw the importance of their roles from different perspectives. The study concludes that corporate influence (the communications philosophy of the corporate executives) is an important variable in the study of organizational communication and that the methodology used in the study is useful for exploratory research but, because it does not provide an opportunity to manipulate variables, it precludes the formulation of generalizations or causal judgments. (RL)

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A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF COMMUNICATION AT THE CORPORATE LEVEL OF TWO TELEVISION GROUP OWNERS

Presented to the Western Speech Communication Association

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Phoenix, Arizona, November 1977

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A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF COMMUNICATION
AT THE CORPORATE LEVEL OF TWO TELEVISION GROUP OWNERS

As early as 1938, Barnard indicated that "the first function of the executive is to develop and maintain a system of communication."[1] However, as late as 1972, Redding indicated the scarcity of scientific research endeavors related to organizational communication.[2] Despite some early research in the area, it has been only in the last five years that the literature has reflected a concentrated effort to study communication as a prominent dimension within organizations. Goldhaber, in discussing the role of communication in organizations, indicates that "its salience as the process which connects the system parts to each other and the system to its environment, justifies its prominence."[3] Nevertheless, contradictory results suggest that the research has just begun to scratch the surface. Koehler, Anatol, and Applbaum, in discussing organizational communication have commented that "although there is now a growing recognition of its dynamic role within the life of an organization, it is still one of the least understood subjects."[4]

Rationale for the Current Study

At least part of the blame for the lack of organizational communication data development can be attributed to methodological inadequacies.[5] This researcher

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[1]Chester Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938).

[2]W. Charles Redding, Communication Within the Organization (New York: Industrial Communication Council, 1972).

[3]Gerald M. Goldhaber, "The ICA Communication Audit: Rationale and Development," a paper presented to the Academy of Management convention, August, 1976, pp. 4-5.

[4]Jerry W. Koehler, Karl W. E. Anatol, and Ronald L. Applbaum, Organizational Communication: Behavioral Perspectives (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 1.

[5]Redding; Goldhaber.

has experienced both the value and the frustrations of using interviews (with their inherent validity questions) and various copyrighted paper and pencil measures as tools in organizational communication work. Even the ICA Communication Audit which this researcher has used in an officially sanctioned study and which is an extremely useful and comprehensive tool is not a finalized instrument as of this writing.[6]

It seems that the Communication Audit, other paper and pencil tools for assessing organizational communication, and even the interview techniques suffer from one or all of four potential problems:

1. The major concentration is not on the assessment of specific communication functions or roles of individual personnel.

2. There is a limited measure of actual behavior.

3. There is not a direct measure of the impact of top management in a conglomerate structure. Hall suggests that "There is very little evidence regarding the effect that top leaders have on organizations" and criticizes previous studies for their neglect in that regard.[7] Most of the techniques inquire about communication from top management but leave the question open as to whether the reference is to top conglomerate management or top management within a division or a subsidiary. It seem likely that there is at least some confounding of data as provided from different hierarchical levels of personnel, so that a true indication of high level impact seems neglected in all tools used for assessing organizational communication.

4. Perceptions of personnel as reflected on standardized tests would not seem

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[6]Goldhaber.

[7]Richard H. Hall, Organizations: Structure and Process (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 248.

to be sensitive to absolute differences in communication quantity and quality between organizations. A "satisfactory amount" of communication might be totally different as perceived by individuals in different organizations. The utility of the satisfaction measure would still be great in diagnosing problems in the individual organizations. However, a comparison of the amount of communication between the two organizations would be meaningless.

Potential problems with the most frequently used instruments in past research as outlined above prompted an investigation of communication at the top level of two television groups--~~corporations~~ which fully own more than one U. S. commercial television station. Television groups were selected because of the researcher's background in media and because the uniqueness of an industry with three-year license renewal stipulations, limitations on station ownership, and legal public interest requirements left questions about corporate television roles and communication functioning within the industry totally unanswered. Exploratory in nature, this study attempted to focus on the communication behavior of two television leaders and provide initial information in answer to two specific research questions:

1. What is the nature of the communication process that exists involving the corporate leader in selected television corporations?

2. What are the communicative roles of the television executives in the selected corporations?

To accomplish the research objectives, the researcher used a process of systematic observation of the corporate television leaders and supplemented that information with data generated through a standardized paper and pencil tool and systematic interviews. Systematic observation has been identified by Farace, Monge, and Russell as an important means of "describing the communication behaviors of a

relatively limited number of key respondents in great detail."[8] For this study, not only was communication behavior observed but all work behavior of corporate television leaders was observed through an actual process of "shadowing" the subjects during work hours. Problems with excessive costs and risks of altering "normal" communication patterns (inherent with observation techniques) seemed outweighed in this exploratory analysis because the systematic observation permitted communication profiles to be drawn of key individuals at the top level of organisations, permitted an assessment of the manifestation of corporate communication philosophies, and enabled the researcher to infer communicative roles, functions, and to some degree impact of top management.

In this case, the tool for quantification of communication behavior during the observation was the Interaction Process Analysis developed by Bales and used previously in small group research.[9] In consideration of the small group dimensions of the leadership process, it was felt that the IPA could be a valuable data gathering instrument in organizational communication study as well. The utility of systematic observation and the IPA are examined as additional objectives of this study.

Considering the combination of research techniques used, a tremendous volume of data was obtained. This paper reports the results of the different research techniques related solely to communication dimensions in the two television groups (in answer to the previously indicated research questions), summarises some similarities and contrasts in communication functioning between the two groups studied, and analyzes the comparative merits of the different research techniques

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[8]Richard V. Farace, Peter R. Monge, and Hamish M. Russell, Communicating and Organising (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1977), p. 210.

[9]Robert F. Bales and Fred L. Strodtbeck, "Phases in Group Problem-Solving," Group Dynamics: Research and Theory, 3d ed., ed. Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968), 389-398.

for the study of communication in organisations. As a result, this work begins an assessment of the corporate functioning specifically related to the communicative role of the corporate executives in industry. Further, the results should provide researchers and practitioners with some insights regarding methodological utilisation for future work in organisational communication.

METHODOLOGY

Definitions

For purposes of this study, terms have been operationally defined as follows:

A television group owner is a corporation which fully owns more than one U.S. commercial television station. Reference to television group owner and corporation is synonymous. Television group owners were selected non-randomly. This researcher sent a letter soliciting cooperation to group owners with at least six television stations. The first two to grant full cooperation were chosen for the initial study and results from those two corporations are reported here. The researcher promised anonymity for those participating and in the following sections of this paper corporations are referred to as Corporations A and B.

Corporate television leader or executive is the person identified by the corporation as responsible for the operation of the television entities within that corporation. The corporate television executive was verified by telephone prior to initiation of the study.

Corporate station manager refers to the person with immediate responsibility over a television station owned by a television group owner.

Communication philosophies are beliefs held by or perceived of the corporate television executive which guide his business-related communication activity. The philosophies were obtained from interviews with the corporate television executives and their subordinates.

The communication process in television corporations consists of the number of communication encounters involving the corporate television executives and the nature and direction of communication activity between the executives and others in those encounters. A communication encounter (communication situation) began when the executive or another person said something to the other, included all interaction between the two and any other personnel present during all or part of the time of the encounter, and ended when the researcher and the executive were alone. In cases of telephone communication encounters, the situation ended when the executive hung up the phone. Each memo sent or received was considered one communication encounter.

The initiator of a given communication encounter was identified as the person who initially started a conversation either by physically moving from one location to another for the purpose of interacting with someone or by calling across a hallway or out of an open door or by acknowledging the presence of the other in a common location. In the case of prearranged meetings, the person who arranged the meeting was considered the initiator of the encounter.

Once initiated, the nature and direction of communication activity was quantified using the Interaction Process Analysis (IPA).[10] As a tool designed to quantify communication activity of individuals in group situations, the IPA provided a means of systematically recording each of the communication contributions in one of twelve mutually exclusive categories. Despite criticism of the technique,[11] this researcher's familiarity and experience with the IPA and relatively high reliability correlations when compared with other observers in other studies seemed to be valuable support for the use of the technique for this exploratory research.

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[10]Robert F. Bales, Interaction Process Analysis, A Method for the Study of Small Groups (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1950).

[11]Dennis Gouran, "Conceptual and Methodological Approaches to the Study of Leadership," Central States Speech Journal 21 (1970): p. 222.

The IPA did provide an initial means for analysis of the recorded contributions of the persons involved in conversation and made it possible to assess the nature of the communication activity. In consideration of the close relationship of interpersonal communication and small group communication with leadership study, the IPA seemed even more justifiable because the twelve categories of interaction when combined correspond to the leadership dimensions of initiating structure and socio-emotional support as identified in the leadership literature.

Because of potential problems that might have occurred with a procedure utilizing systematic observation in television corporations, additional information was derived from the corporate television executives and their subordinates through the use of Likert's Profile of Organizational Characteristics (POC) test.[12] The POC is a multiple item instrument that generates data about numerous variables including the character of the communication process at work in an organization. Use of the POC in conjunction with systematic observation provided interpretive information for use in this descriptive study and provided a means of checking the validity of the systematic observation technique.

The communicative roles of the television executives are the required activities of the leaders as inferred from quantification of the above variables.

Data Collection

Data were gathered from systematic observation of the corporate television executive in each corporation and the POC as completed by the executives, other personnel, and corporate station managers. A third technique--interviewing--generated data from the executive and subordinates. The interviewing provided interpretive data for discussion and some measure of internal validity of systematic observation. The interviews were conducted before, during, and after observation.

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[12]Rensis Likert, The Human Organization (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1967).

All of the systematic observation and interviewing for each corporation took place during five consecutive week days. Thirty-one actual hours were spent in direct observation of the corporate television executive in Corporation A, and thirty hours were spent in direct observation of the executive in Corporation B. None of the time spent in interviews with personnel other than the executives was considered part of the time of systematic observation, nor was the communication activity quantified during time spent when the leader was not present. From data generated by the research tools, the researcher built a narrative for analyzing the communication process in each corporation studied.

DATA ANALYSIS

CORPORATION A

Corporation A consists of six divisions of which broadcasting is one. The Corporation owns seven television stations. The television president is fully responsible for the operation of the television entities, answering upward only to the chief executive officer of the entire conglomerate. The television president's staff consists of three people: a senior vice president in charge of business matters, an administrative assistant, and a corporate level news expert who is responsible for assisting in the news operations of the corporate TV stations. The offices of the president and the news executive are located in the building of one of the television stations. The business vice president and the administrative assistant have offices at the location of one of the other corporate stations, but nearly 600 miles away from the office of the president. The other stations are located in widely separated areas of the country.

Communication Philosophies

The executive believes in being involved in station operation. He is active in the management of the station located in the building which also houses his office. The philosophy is that by being involved in the activities of that one

station, he can better understand the problems of the industry and better be prepared to provide leadership and assistance to all the stations in the corporation. As part of the implementation of that philosophy, he takes a walk to a different department in the station each day sharing social acknowledgments with the people he visits and occasionally asking for perceptions of problems or suggesting some action. The leader reasons that the walks allow him to keep a constant "feel" for the climate within the station. Further, he believes that the walks allow him to activate communication while reinforcing the notion that he is willing to listen and talk with subordinates. He indicates that these walks are common policy when he visits other stations in the group too, allowing him to make his own diagnosis of the state of the internal activities at the station level.

The walks and the station involvement reflect this leader's belief in a completely open policy of communication. He allows himself to be available for communication from any level of the organisation. Occasionally he will make the suggestion that the people should consult their immediate supervisor, but he is willing to listen and to take action himself when he deems it necessary. He encourages people to come to him when they have creative ideas even if it be ideas for departments in which the personnel are not involved. Subordinates indicate a willingness to initiate communication activity because they know the leader will listen and they are confident that the leader will work to implement meaningful suggestions. The open communication results in a great deal of departure from the formal hierarchy as established by the organizational chart and places the leader at the center of the communication activity throughout the organisation.

Interaction Process Analysis

Systematic observation found the leader and subordinates at all levels involved in an open and active communication process. To the extent that the observation period was typical, the leader's philosophy of open communication and station

involvement seemed to be at work. The communication activity was facilitated by the leader's walks around the station.

During the observation period the leader entered into 171 communication encounters involving him with 67 different people. The leader interacted with personnel from all levels of the corporation including his superior, but the majority of the interactions were with station level personnel, especially the general sales manager and the business manager of the station housed in the same building as the president's office. In addition, the leader communicated with various people outside the corporation such as film distributors and program packagers. Seventy eight of the total encounters were initiated from below the leader indicating subordinates' perceptions of sincerity in the leader's policy of open communication. Table 1 summarizes the leader's communication encounters.

TABLE 1

TOTAL COMMUNICATION ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LEADER IN CORPORATION A

Personnel	Face-to-Face	Telephone	Memo
Station Managers Only	6	12	11
Other Station Level Subordinates	60*	6	3
Corporate Level Subordinates	5	3	4
Personnel Outside Corporation	7**	26***	0
Superior	0	4	0
Secretary	23	0	1
TOTAL	101	51	19

*In-house station manager was in attendance at 14 of these encounters.
**In-house station manager was in attendance at 2 of these meetings.
***In-house station manager was on telephone extension and involved in one of the telephone encounters.

Once communication was initiated, it seemed to flow in all directions. Table 2 provides a communication profile of the leader in face-to-face and telephone encounters and also provides a totaled profile for all subordinates interacting with the leader. (There seemed to be ample participation of persons talking with

the leader on the telephone too, but individual quantified contributions of the personnel engaged in the conversation with the leader would be speculative.)

TABLE 2

IPA COMMUNICATION PROFILES
(RAW DATA--COMMUNICATION CONTRIBUTIONS IN CORPORATION A)

Communication Category	Leader's Contributions (Face-to-Face)	Leader's Contributions (Telephone)	Others' Contributions (Face-to-Face)
Shows Solidarity	99	117	23
Shows Tension Release	118	60	109
Shows Agreement	159	200	83
Gives Suggestion	158	57	76
Gives Opinion	216	86	169
Gives Orientation	287	132	355
Asks for Orientation	259	92	164
Asks for Opinion	89	28	30
Asks for Suggestion	41	12	23
Disagrees	10	5	4
Shows Tension	1	0	0
Shows Antagonism	5	7	0
TOTAL	1442	796	1036

The leader's communication summarized was high in both task and relationships contributions, although relatively more active in task behavior. The leader was most active in the giving of information, acknowledgment, and asking for information. Those involved in communication with the leader were most active in giving information.

In summary, systematic observation indicated extensive interaction with personnel at the in-house station and moderate interaction with station managers and corporate level personnel. Throughout the organization, there seemed to be an openness of communication. The leader tried in most instances to involve the subordinates in communication, especially in seeking opinions and information from them, but communication was initiated at all levels and flowed in all directions during discussion. The character of the interaction as perceived by this researcher seemed to be supportive within a general climate of trust. No one seemed reluctant to share ideas for future use, complain about problems on the job, or just provide

information. On the other hand, the extent of the communication activity of the executive may be resulting in an excessive internal reliance on the leader and may be providing an inhibiting impact on organizational personnel development. Surely, the leader's involvement was impacting communication climate throughout the organization.

The Profile of Organizational Characteristics

Specific items from the POC test which directly related to communication dimensions observed provided the source of data for discussion in this section. The leader and ten subordinates completed the test. Subordinates included four of the seven station managers (all seven were asked to complete the test), two corporate level subordinates, and four station level subordinates other than station managers. (Preliminary interviews and initial observation suggested that all of the above personnel either had a direct hierarchical link to the leader or were likely to communicate with him on a regular basis.) For each item, subjects were asked to record their perceptions on a continuum ranging from an extreme of task orientation to the opposite extreme of relationships orientation, mutual trust, and confidence.[13] Results discussed in this section include reference and comparison of the responses of the executive alone and responses of subordinates.

Responses to the POC test indicated perceptions at all levels of the open and active communication process as identified by the leader as his intended philosophy. Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 report perceptions of the amount of interaction, the origination of communication, and the direction of flow. In all cases the perceptions of the leader and the subordinates are very close. In all cases the responses are similar to the behavior systematically observed, and indicate at least a moderate degree of mutual trust and open communication.

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[13]Likert.

TABLE 3

POC--AMOUNT AND CHARACTER OF INTERACTION IN CORPORATION A

Perceptions	Little, with distrust	Little, with caution	Moderate, moderate trust	Extensive, high trust
Leader			X	
Subordinates		1	1 1 2	1 2 1 1

TABLE 4

POC--EXTENT TO WHICH SUPERIORS WILLINGLY SHARE INFORMATION WITH SUBORDINATES--CORPORATION A

Perceptions	Minimum	Superior-selected information	Needed information and answers	All relevant and desired information
Leader			X	
Subordinates			3 3	3 1

TABLE 5

POC--SUBORDINATES' FEELING OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR INITIATING ACCURATE UPWARD COMMUNICATION--CORPORATION A

Perceptions	None	Little	Some	Considerable
Leader			X	
Subordinates			1 1 3 2	1 2

TABLE 6

POC--DIRECTION OF INFORMATION FLOW--CORPORATION A

Perceptions	Downward	Mostly Down	Down and Up	All directions
Leader				X
Subordinates			2 1 2	2 1 1 1

Tables 7 and 8 reflect perceptions of communication openness by all in terms of task-related behavior and acceptance by subordinates.

TABLE 7

POC--AMOUNT OF INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION AIMED AT ACHIEVING ORGANIZATION'S OBJECTIVES--CORPORATION A

Perceptions	Very little	Little	Quite a bit	Much
Leader				X
Subordinates			2 1 2 2	1 2

TABLE 8

POC--EXTENT TO WHICH COMMUNICATIONS ARE ACCEPTED BY SUBORDINATES--CORPORATION A

Perceptions	Viewed with suspicion	Some accepted some suspicion	Often accepted	Generally accepted
Leader				X
Subordinates		1	2 1 2	1 1 1 1

Tables 9 and 10 seem to provide some indication of the leader's impact on communication activity. Discrepancies reflected in Table 9 suggests that despite the openness of communication, there is still some inhibition of subordinates to initiate downward communication. Apparently, any such inhibition is not present with regard to horizontal communication as indicated in Table 10.

TABLE 9

POC--DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION--WHERE INITIATED--CORPORATION A

Perceptions	At top	Primarily at top or patterned on top	Some lower initiative	At all levels
Leader		X		
Subordinates	1 1	1 1	1	1 2 1

TABLE 10

POC--SIDEWARD COMMUNICATION--CORPORATION A

Perceptions	Usually poor	Fairly poor	Fair to good	Good-Excellent
Leader				X
Subordinates			1 2	2 1 3 1

Summarizing the perceptions of communication dimensions from the POC test, one could conclude that there is a high degree of internal awareness by the leader of internal communications. The POC results are also very similar to those observed communication encounters. The discrepancy in the perceptions of the initiation of downward communication would indicate top leader impact at lower levels and perhaps prescribe a closer analysis to the extent that it is not intended by the leader.

Interviews and Summary of Communication

Interviews indicated that the observation week was typical in terms of communication activity, especially as it involved openness and flow. It was confirmed that the leader was constantly involved in station operation, not only at the in-house station, but in others as well. They further indicated that in periods in which stations experience problems, the leader becomes even more involved in problem solution. Interviews also confirmed that the scarcity of communication between the leader and corporate level personnel was typical except for times of monetary goal setting.

Organizational communication involving the leader was predominantly oral. Few memos were exchanged during the observation period. However, the leader did indicate that there are regular written reports that he receives from all his station managers. The regular written reports sent upward provide the impetus for subsequent communication downward, and in fact dictate the nature and amount of the downward communication. These reports provide another indication of top level impact on communication activity in the organization.

This executive's role as judged simply from communication activity was as a facilitator of interaction. As such, he might be depicted as the person responsible for establishing a climate for work throughout the entire organization.

Corporation B

Corporation B consists of five divisions of which broadcasting is one. The corporation owns six television stations. The corporate television executive is president of the entire corporation and a member of the board of directors. His corporate staff consists of two people: a financial vice president and a vice president of broadcast affairs. The president's office and those of his corporate staff are housed in the same building as one of the corporate owned television stations. The other stations are located in widely separated areas of the country.

Communication Philosophies

As determined from interviews with the leader and other personnel at Corporation B, aggressive activity in the broadcast industry reflects the major philosophy of the leader. He believes that the industry involvement allows him to provide key bits of information for a competitive advantage to the corporate owned stations. However, except for problem situations and twice-a-year visits to stations, it is the leader's philosophy not to get involved in station operation. This leader believes that informal social chats with station level personnel on his visits are sufficient to keep communication open and allow him to diagnose the internal climate. He is willing to listen to communication initiated from all levels below him in the organization, but encourages subordinate personnel to confer with each other and work as a team in solving problems if at all possible. The leader did concede that he works and communicates constantly with the financial vice president for corporate financial advantages.

Interaction Process Analysis

The communication in the corporation as it involved the leader seemed to be open but moderately active at best. Most of the leader's communication activity

occurred with the financial vice president. A great deal of autonomy seemed to exist among all levels of subordinates, except as related to corporate level matters. For the most part, the observed communication was in conjunction with the leader's philosophy.

During the period of observation, the leader entered into 61 communication encounters involving 27 different people. The leader interacted with personnel from all levels of the corporation (including members of the board of directors) and with various people outside the corporation, but the most encounters involved the leader with the financial vice president. Over 2/3 of the encounters (42) were initiated by personnel other than the leader. Table 11 summarizes the leader's communication encounters.

TABLE 11

TOTAL COMMUNICATION ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LEADER IN CORPORATION B

Personnel	Face-to-Face	Telephone	Memo
Station Managers Only	4	1	0
Other Station Level Subordinates	9	2	0
Corporate Level Subordinates	14	0	0
Personnel Outside Corporation	0	15	0
Superior (Board of Directors)	5	0	0
Secretary	11	0	0
TOTAL	43	18	0

Once initiated, communication flowed in all directions in face-to-face situations, as summarized in Table 12. Evident from the table, however, is that subordinates made relatively fewer contributions indicative of solidarity, tension release, and agreement--the relationships contributions in communication. The suggestion is that subordinates understand the leader's philosophy of little communication and thus eliminate most non-business communication from their interactions. Table 12 also indicates the leader's telephone communication profile reflective of more relationships activity on the part of the leader. A qualification should be noted in that many of the phone conversations were with non-business personnel.

TABLE 12

IPA COMMUNICATION PROFILES
(RAW DATA--COMMUNICATION CONTRIBUTIONS IN CORPORATION B)

Communication Category	Leader's Contributions (Face-to-Face)	Leader's Contributions (Telephone)	Others' Contributions (Face-to-Face)
Shows Solidarity	39	66	12
Shows Tension Release	24	25	15
Shows Agreement	38	85	13
Gives Suggestion	46	26	13
Gives Opinion	51	30	35
Gives Orientation	93	66	133
Asks for Orientation	61	26	42
Asks for Opinion	24	9	6
Asks for Suggestion	4	1	3
Disagrees	3	3	2
Shows Tension	0	0	0
Shows Antagonism	1	0	0
TOTAL	384	337	274

The leader's communication was comparatively more task oriented than relationships oriented as quantified by the IPA in face-to-face situations with the most contributions being in the area of giving information. In telephone conversations, the leader was more relationships oriented with most contributions showing agreement.

In summary, systematic observation indicated moderate communication activity in Corporation B. It seems that the great percentage of upward initiation of communication supports an overall climate of trust at the present. However, the lack of subordinate and leader relationships communication may be presenting unnecessary tensions into communication situations. The communication philosophy could be developing internal strength and personnel development by forcing subordinate decision making responsibilities. However, the philosophy may also be developing communication barriers by shutting off channels of communication upward when in fact assistance from the corporate level would have been advisable.

The Profile of Organizational Characteristics

In Corporation B, the leader, four of six station managers, two corporate level employees and three other subordinates completed the POC. Tables 13, 14,

15, and 16 report perceptions of the amount of interaction, the origination of communication, and the direction of flow. In most areas the leader perceptions and those of subordinates are in direct relation. However, the leader reflects a suspicion of upward communication initiation, either underestimating its effectiveness or disappointed at its scarcity.

TABLE 13

POC--AMOUNT AND CHARACTER OF INTERACTION IN CORPORATION B

Perceptions	Little, with distrust	Little, with caution	Moderate, moderate trust	Extensive, high trust
Leader			X	
Subordinates		1 1 1	3 1	2

TABLE 14

POC--EXTENT TO WHICH SUPERIORS WILLINGLY SHARE INFORMATION WITH SUBORDINATES--CORPORATION B

Perceptions	Minimum	Superior-selected information	Needed information and answers	All relevant and desired information
Leader			X	
Subordinates		2	1 1 1 1	3

TABLE 15

POC--SUBORDINATES' FEELING OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR INITIATING ACCURATE UPWARD COMMUNICATION--CORPORATION B

Perceptions	None	Little	Some	Considerable
Leader		X		
Subordinates		1 1	4 1	2

TABLE 16

POC--DIRECTION OF INFORMATION FLOW--CORPORATION B

Perceptions	Downward	Mostly Down	Down and Up	All directions
Leader		X		
Subordinates		1 1 1	1	1 2 1 1

Additional discrepancies between leader perceptions and subordinate perceptions are indicated concerning communication aimed at achieving organizational objectives, acceptance of downward communication, and the initiation of downward communication, as reported in Tables 17, 18, and 19. The misperceptions in communication suggest a need for more disclosure in the organization and suggest some hidden attitudes of distrust or dissatisfaction. To the extent that the attitudes are reflected in even subtle manifestations of behavior, the top level impact may result in closed communication channels, less-than-positive communication climate, and less-than-satisfactory organizational health.

TABLE 17

POC--AMOUNT OF INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION AIMED AT ACHIEVING ORGANIZATION'S OBJECTIVES--CORPORATION B

Perceptions	Very little	Little	Quite a bit	Much
Leader		X		
Subordinates			2 1 2 3	1

TABLE 18

POC--EXTENT TO WHICH COMMUNICATIONS ARE ACCEPTED BY SUBORDINATES--CORPORATION B

Perceptions	Viewed with suspicion	Some accepted some suspicion	Often accepted	Generally accepted
Leader				X
Subordinates		1	1 1	2 1 1 2

TABLE 19

POC--DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION--WHERE INITIATED--CORPORATION B

Perceptions	At top	Primarily at top or patterned on top	Some lower initiative	At all levels
Leader				X
Subordinates		1 2 1 1	1 3	

Horizontal communication was reported as being positive in response to the POC. See Table 20.

TABLE 20

POC--SIDEWARD COMMUNICATION--CORPORATION B

Perceptions	/ Usually poor	/ Fairly poor	/ Fair to Good	/ Good-Excellent/
Leader				X
Subordinates			1 2	4 1 1

In summary, the discrepancy in perceptions suggests the leader is not involved in lower level operation. However, the discrepancies may also suggest a need for reevaluation of attitudes, communication behavior, and philosophies. Perhaps of more important consequence to this paper is that many of the areas of response on the POC do not differ between Corporation B and Corporation A despite the articulated philosophical differences between leader and despite the observed differences. The inability of written tests based on subordinate perceptions to reflect absolute differences between organizations is substantiated.

Interviews and Summary of Communication

The analysis of the above information concerning the communication activity in Corporation B indicates some inconsistencies. It seems that the great percentage of upward initiation of communication observed supports an overall climate of trust at the present time. Further, subjects interviewed felt that they can share information upward if there is a good reason and that they have confidence in the leader. However, the small number of socio-emotional contributions of subordinates in communication with the leader and discrepancies on the POC test may be indicative of some internal skepticism or tension.

Interviews confirmed the typicalness of the week as it involved the leader's communication activity and underscored the leader's close working relationship with his vice president in charge of finance. The interviews did not indicate any communication problems, however. The inconsistent results at least suggest a need for renewed analysis of current attitudes and philosophies.

Most of the communication in Corporation B was oral--either face-to-face or via telephone. However, the leader requires regular written reports from all of his station managers which provide for communication flow upward and which in turn provide the impetus for determining the nature and amount of downward communication.

As inferred solely from the communication activity, the role of the executive seems to be primarily in coordinating the internal operations of the organization. The leader tries to delegate lower level teamwork through his communication philosophy and likely influences communication climate through that philosophy.

SUMMARY

Communication in the two corporations studied differed both in terms of philosophies and in terms of actual communication activity. In both organizations, however, the leaders had similar roles, although they perceived the importance of their roles in somewhat different perspectives. Both maintained ultimate responsibility for corporate control and financial success; both were sources of information for the entire organization; both acted as supporting personnel for some lower level decision making.

In Corporation A, the leader was additionally a facilitator of communication throughout the organization with the resultant openness predictive of internal efficiency and corporate health through a proces of breaking down barriers to communication. The activity, however, may be developing excessive reliance on the leader.

In Corporation B, the leader was less of a facilitator of active communication and more a facilitator of corporate teamwork without upper influence, resulting potentially in personnel development and/or communication barriers.

With due consideration for the differences and similarities of the top leaders, it seems the most important role of each leader was in establishing the climate of work and communication throughout the organization. Potential discrepancies in climate as discussed indicate the different climates likely. However, the role

of the top leaders at the corporate level either through their philosophies of communication and/or through their communication behavior in establishing those climates seems clear. The implication is that to study organizational dimensions without consideration for the corporate influence is to neglect an important variable.

REVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

A review of the methodology used in the current study indicates that systematic observation works as a means of assessing organizational communication and, in fact, seems essential in order to assess absolute differences between organizations. The systematic observation or "shadowing" of the executive was a special strength in this study as it permitted an initial insight into the actual functioning of the televisinn corporation, and permitted inferences into corporate roles that could not have been discerned by written tests or interviews, even used in combination with each other.

The Interaction Process Analysis as a means of systematic observation also works. As reflected in this study (and in most leadership research), the leader is very involved in small group discussion. The IPA facilitates the quantification of communication activity in those discussions through an analysis of actual behavior. With current research emphases in both communication and leadership in organizations, the IPA seems to take on even additional utility because of its adaptation to both areas of study. It does seem to have some weaknesses for the analysis of relationships communication, however, particularly as reflective of dimensions of mutual trust and confidence. This researcher drew inferences in those areas as a result of other interpretive data generated through the research.

The interview technique proved to be valuable as an interpretive tool for observed data. In addition, the interviews provided insights that went beyond the week of observation, and they allowed discussion of philosophies and general activity that did not surface during the week of observation.

The written test seemed most valuable in this study in revealing hidden differences between subordinates and the leaders. As such, the written tests seem most helpful as diagnostic tools for pointing out weaknesses in organizations that are overtly successful and internally sound as the two studied here.

For exploratory study such as the current research, all three techniques--observation, interview, and written--seem essential in order to give a researcher an adequate understanding of any given organization. It may be especially valuable for graduate students or persons preparing for a career in a certain industry to utilize such a combination of techniques for graduate research. With an history of information available concerning the functioning and roles of industry corporations, the shadowing may become less important diagnostically. It does, however, seem to provide insights on internal climate which cannot be ascertained from either of the other techniques.

The strength of this study in providing primary data from systematic observation also contributes to a limitation in selecting the corporations to be studied. Considering that potentially sensitive encounters could occur during the observation period, it was essential that the executives understand the researcher's purpose prior to being systematically observed or even agreeing to the systematic observation. As a result, the leaders may have agreed to cooperate only in nonrepresentative weeks. Subtle behavioral changes may have even resulted. Or perhaps only secure, successful executives would agree to such an observation in the first place.

As an additional limitation, the systematic observation technique does not provide an opportunity to manipulate variables which precludes any statement of causality. The ability to generalize from this study was also limited in light of the fact that only two corporations were studied. However, the initial information relevant to television corporations and the findings relevant to utilization of research methodologies would indicate some key implications for future research.